

influx of African Americans from Wilmington into Brooklyn stirred New York ministers to action and made headlines in local papers. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* noted that there was an increasing number of blacks from the south because of “unsettled conditions” there.²⁴

Most of the African American workers who left the city were employed as laborers, cooks, washerwomen, porters, and nurses. The void left by the removal of these workers from the city was partially filled by other workers moving into the city. One major business in the city, that of the naval stores and turpentine industry, suffered as a result of the exodus. In 1901 the *Messenger* included a brief article to explain an “Exodus of Turpentine Hands.” The article stated that two “coach loads of negro turpentine hands” left the city for Florida’s turpentine regions. The article also reported that other black workers would soon follow this first set and that “labor [was] already scarce” and the exodus would “make the scarcity all the greater.” Sprunt’s cotton compress operations suffered the loss of workers earlier than the turpentine trade. By August 1899, Sprunt had shortages of employees because over half of his workforce was in New York city, employed as hotel workers. A former black worker from Wilmington told a *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reporter that he did not think many of Sprunt’s former employees would return to the city because “they can’t get over the idea that their lives will be threatened again” if they returned to Wilmington. The article continued that women and girls had also left Wilmington and their exodus had resulted in a “lack of domestic servants” and that white

women “say they can’t get help now.” The article also stated that many of the refugees now living in New York owned homes in the city that they couldn’t sell or rent, and that they had lost money in “bank troubles” in the city.²⁵

Percent of NC-born residents in given states that were non-white		
State	1880	1900
New York	56 (1,270)	68 (5,866)
Pennsylvania	45 (629)	74 (4,862)
District of Columbia	63 (497)	62 (1,891)
New Jersey	52 (306)	77 (3,586)
Ohio	62 (2,376)	60 (1,998)
Virginia	44 (10,213)	50 (27,994)
Connecticut	65 (334)	67 (876)
Delaware	23 (17)	53 (89)
Massachusetts	72 (645)	72 (2,573)
Rhode Island	73 (118)	66 (297)
Louisiana	77 (4,708)	79 (3,867)
Maryland	39 (484)	49 (1,622)
South Carolina	40 (7,942)	24 (6,654)

A concentration of refugees from Wilmington can be found in Whitesboro, New Jersey. Congressman George Henry White realized that men and women living in Wilmington could not prosper in a post-1898 environment and encouraged northward migration. White’s vision of a black town for Wilmington refugees was realized in 1901 when his organization, the Afro-American Equitable Association, purchased land in Cape May county New Jersey for settlement. Whitesboro emerged as an example of the success of black towns and their residents when all worked to developed “group self-reliance and solidarity that enriched local civic pride,

²⁴ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (New York), January 30, 1899. The article discussed growth in the A.M.E. church in Brooklyn as a result of the influx of African Americans who had been members of a large A.M.E. church in Wilmington that had a building worth \$40,000. The church referenced in the article was probably St. Stephen’s.

²⁵ *Wilmington Messenger*, January 5, 1901; *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (New York), August 25, 1899.